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SUBJECT: JERUSALEM MEDIA REACTION (06/04): "THE STRATEGIC AND
ESSENTIAL ROLE OF CAIRO"

Main Stories:

Obama's June 3 visit to Saudi Arabia captures lead coverage in Al-Hayat Al-Jadida and Al-Quds and front page coverage in Al-Ayyam. All papers run lead photos of King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia warmly welcoming President Obama in Riyadh. The papers quote King Abdullah saying, "I want to convey my wishes to the American people who are represented by a man who deserves to be in this position". Obama met with King Abdullah and discussed means of reviving the peace process in the Middle East, papers report. The papers also report that Obama's anticipated speech to the Muslim world will call on Arabs and Israelis to show seriousness about ending conflict. Obama noted that many Israelis realize the importance of halting settlement activities and many Palestinians realize that they must make positive gestures towards Israel. Obama noted that the establishment of an independent Palestinian state would serve the interests of Israel as a Jewish state, according to coverage.

Al-Ayyam runs front page coverage citing Wafa quoting a U.S. official stating that President Obama seeks to establish positive partnerships with Muslim countries focusing on cooperation in the fields of development, health, education and technology. Al-Ayyam runs separate front page coverage citing AFP on Congressional Democrats criticizing Obama's statements regarding Israeli settlements in the West Bank because they represent a change in U.S. policy towards Israel.

Al-Quds and Al-Hayat Al-Jadida run front page coverage citing AFP about 200 Israeli "right wing" protestors gathering on June 3 in front of the U.S. Consulate General in Jerusalem. The gathering was in protest of President Obama's foreign policy which they perceive of as biased towards the Palestinians, according to coverage. Al-Hayat Al-Jadida runs a front page photo of protestors holding

signs that read, "Barack Hussein Obama, No you Can't."

All dailies run front page coverage citing AFP about Israel dismantling Rimonim checkpoint known as "Asira" in Nablus and the Birzeit checkpoint known as "Atara." Papers highlight that 600 checkpoints remain throughout the West Bank.

Al-Hayat Al-Jadida runs front page coverage citing Wafa about the PLO's satisfaction with "positive remarks" made by President Obama regarding U.S. serious intent to re-launch a real peace process in the Middle East, beginning with a halt to settlements activities, including natural growth.

Al-Ayyam ran its lead story under a banner headline highlighting a World Bank report noting that the Palestinian economy has suffered from the "many Israeli-imposed restrictions" during 2008. The article emphasized that the, "strategic goal of an economically viable Palestinian state can only be achieved if the West Bank and Gaza are maintained as an integral economic entity."

Al-Quds and Al-Hayat Al-Jadida run front page coverage citing Reuters quoting Israeli Defense Minister Barak noting that Israel can resolve its differences with the U.S. regarding West Bank settlements. Barak continued that Israel supports Obama's initiative for a regional peace settlement, according to reporting. Barak also noted "We pledged to respect Israel's signed agreements with the U.S." but added that, "[President] Bush endorsed the building of new houses in settlements to accommodate natural growth."

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BLOCK QUOTES:

1) Abdil Hamid Suwaylim commented in independent Al-Ayyam under the headline, "President Obama: Is there really anything new?"(6/4):
"Will the [Obama] Administration, which has involved itself in the [Palestinian] conflict's smallest details like never before, provide a comprehensive vision suitable for this phase [of the conflict]?...
Will this vision have to wait until a new [U.S.] relationship is formed with the Arab and Muslim worlds...?"

2) Independent Al-Quds editorialized in "Obama in Cairo," (6/4):
"President Obama's visit to the region and his anticipated speech in Cairo today have captured great attention locally, regionally and internationally... It is worth noting that the President's tour does not include a visit to Israel..., but the more important thing is the selection of Cairo as the place from which the President is sending his message to the Muslim world. This can only reemphasize the strategic and essential role of Cairo in the Arab and Muslim worlds."

WALLES